



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND
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MIAMI, FL 33172-1217

*SC Regulation 0905

1 April 2004

Effective upon receipt

Information Management: Records Management

PREPARATION AND MANAGEMENT OF CORRESPONDENCE
IN USSOUTHCOM

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* This regulation supersedes USSOUTHCOM Regulation 25-2 dated 1 January 2003.

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Chapter 1 Correspondence Preparation

Section I - General

1-1. Purpose. This regulation establishes policies and procedures for the preparation and transmittal of correspondence within the United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM). This regulation is applicable to all personnel assigned to Headquarters, USSOUTHCOM, component and subordinate commands, and security assistance offices as specified.

1-2. References.

- a. Joint Staff Manual (JSM) 5711.01, Joint Staff Correspondence Preparation, 1 March 1999
- b. Army Regulation (AR) 25-50, Preparing and Managing Correspondence, 5 March 2001
- c. AR 310-50, Authorized Abbreviations, Brevity Codes, and Acronyms, 15 November 1985
- d. AR 380-5, Department of the Army Information Security Program, 29 September 2000
- e. Department of Defense (DoD) Reg. 5200.1R, Information Security Program, 17 January 1997
- f. Department of the Army (DA) Pam. 600-67, Effective Writing for Army Leaders, 2 June 1986
- g. SC Regulation 525-22, Reporting Procedures, 31 October 2001
- h. SC Regulation 1-13, Distinguished Visitors (DV) Program, 8 March 2004

1-3. Abbreviations and Terms. Terms, acronyms, and abbreviations used in this regulation are explained as introduced in the text.

1-4. Responsibilities.

- a. The Secretary, Joint Staff (SJS) has overall responsibility for management and administration of correspondence preparation.
- b. USSOUTHCOM Directors will supervise and manage the preparation of correspondence in accordance with (IAW) this regulation.
- c. Component commands, subordinate units, and security assistance offices will follow applicable portions of this regulation when corresponding with this headquarters.

1-5. Objectives.

- a. Create a standard of excellence for written communication within USSOUTHCOM.
- b. Provide clear instructions for the preparation of all correspondence.
- c. Reduce the cost of preparing correspondence.
- d. Standardize the preparation and distribution of correspondence.
- e. Provide clear instructions for the preparation of staff action packages.

Section II - General Correspondence Guidance

1-6. Methods of Communication.

- a. *Personal or telephone contact.* Whenever appropriate, conduct official business via personal contact, local telephone, Defense Switched Network (DSN), or electronic mail (e-mail). A Memorandum for Record (MFR) should be used to document any decisions or agreements reached during these communications.
- b. *Written communications.* Comply with the command's knowledge management guidance to ensure information is either delivered to or available for authorized recipients.

c. *Memorandum*. The memorandum will be used for military purposes only. Do not use memorandum format for correspondence outside of the Department of Defense (DoD), including corresponding with the families of military members, civilian government agencies, private businesses, or foreign military officials. See paragraph 2-5 for the proper use of the memorandum.

d. *Letter*. Letters will be used for correspondence addressed to the President or the Vice President of the United States, members of the White House staff, members of Congress, Justices of the Supreme Court, heads of departments and agencies, State governors, mayors, foreign government officials, and the public. Letters may also be used to address individuals outside the department or agency when a personal tone is appropriate, such as in letters of commendation, congratulations, or condolence. Do not use personal letters for official business. See paragraph 3-2 for the proper use of the letter.

e. *E-Mail*. E-mail is official communication. It can be used to distribute and forward all official command information unless specified in taskers or other directive correspondence. It can be used to distribute and forward formal official documents. It can be used as a substitute for a Staff Action Summary Sheet (SASS) only if requested in the tasker.

f. *Defense Messaging System (DMS)*. DMS is the most formal means to electronically transmit official command information.

1-7. Coordination.

a. Staff, agency, subordinate, or component concurrence or nonconcurrence is critical to the decision-making process. Coordinate actions via the quickest and most informal method. Use discussions, personal visits, and telephone calls instead of correspondence. When practical, coordinate actions during the draft stages to avoid changes to the final copy. Record the results of coordination on a Staff Action Summary Sheet (SASS). If the tasker lists a Directorate or Special Staff as an assist, then the staff action must be coordinated with those Directorates/Special Staffs or Components.

b. There are three kinds of Review/Coordination.

(1) Concurrence: This response indicates that the agency reviewing the action finds the action acceptable in the current form.

(2) Concur with comments: This response indicates that the agency reviewing the action finds it acceptable, but is providing comments to make the action better. Comments are often administrative in nature. The lead organization will consider all comments and include them as appropriate when forwarding the action to the Command Group. Additionally, the office of primary responsibility (OPR) should indicate on the SASS whether or not the comments were incorporated into the final draft package and, if not, why.

(3) Nonconcurrence: This response indicates the information presented is unacceptable to the agency reviewing the action. The reviewing element must provide comments explaining the reason for nonconcurrence. The lead organization must then evaluate the response and attempt to resolve the nonconcurrence. If the nonconcurrence cannot be resolved, the lead organization must explicitly address this nonconcurrence in the staff action and recommend a course of action.

c. Release authority for submission to the Command Group. The director must authenticate staff actions addressed to the Commander (CDR), Deputy Commander (DCDR), or Chief of Staff (COS). If the director is on leave or TDY, the deputy or vice director can annotate "TDY" or "Leave" and authenticate for the director.

d. Action Officers (AO) that require coordination with subordinate component commands can use the Component Liaison Officers (LNO) as a conduit to receive that coordination. NOTE: In most cases, the component LNO will require a minimum of one week to coordinate an action through their command.

e. Include all concurrence/nonconcurrence comments with the staff action package.

1-8. Suspenses.

a. The suspense set by the SJS tasker is the date the action is required to the end user. If the tasker says provide to the CDR by 10 Dec 04, then the package must be to the CDR by close of business (COB) on 10 Dec 04. Turning packages into the SJS Does Not constitute meeting the suspense.

b. The lead directorate can set milestone suspenses to assist directorates in order to meet the SJS suspense on the tasker.

c. Suspense extensions. The SJS can extend a suspense once for non Joint Staff taskers. Any subsequent request for a suspense requires DCOS or COS approval.

1-9. Routing Correspondence.

a. *Routing action correspondence.* Correspondence will be routed through commands, agencies, or offices expected to exercise control, take action, or be concerned with the issue in question. Send correspondence as directly as possible to the action office concerned. See paragraph 2-7 a.(1). Include the AO's name and office symbol when addressing correspondence.

b. *Command channels.* Route correspondence containing policy matters, command decisions, or official recommendations through command channels.

1-10. Rewriting and Drafts.

a. *Correspondence and mission accomplishment.* Correspondence must aid effective and efficient communication and decision-making. The use of proper grammar and construction, as well as logical organization, brevity, and careful editing, will improve writing and serve as a tool to help USSOUTHCOM accomplish its mission.

b. *Rewriting.* The objectives of effective correspondence are clarity and brevity. Do not rewrite a piece of internal correspondence unless it is clearly inadequate for its intended purpose.

c. *Drafts.* Drafts may be submitted for approval when producing a large number of the same document. This is the exception and should be done only to save time.

Section III - Specific Correspondence Guidance

1-11. Use of Acronyms and Abbreviations. Use military and civilian acronyms in military writing, if appropriate. Do not use military acronyms when writing to individuals or organizations outside of the DoD. The first time an acronym is used in a document spell it out and follow it with the acronym in parentheses. The acronym may be used later in the document without parentheses. Do not begin a sentence with an acronym or abbreviation. Do not abbreviate a word unless it is used more than twice in a document.

1-12. Letterhead Stationery. Use USSOUTHCOM stationery for all formal correspondence. A template for the USSOUTHCOM letterhead is available in the Public Folders on the Local Area Network (LAN) system. When generating correspondence for signature, use the stationery IAW guidelines in Appendix A.

1-13. Classified Correspondence. Information that requires protection against unauthorized disclosure in the interest of national security shall be classified. Correspondence containing classified information will be safeguarded as prescribed in AR 380-5 (Department of the Army Information Security Program) dated 29 September 2000 and appropriate USSOUTHCOM security documents. The contents of classified communication will be revealed only to individuals who have the appropriate security clearance and whose official duties require such information.

1-14. Identification of Writer. Always identify the writer's military rank or civilian prefix, full name (including nickname as appropriate), e-mail address if desired, and telephone number. This rule also applies to identifying a point of contact (POC) in the last paragraph of the correspondence. When addressing someone at another military installation, add the writer's (or POC's) DSN telephone number. If DSN service is not available, list the international access country code, and commercial telephone number. When in doubt, use both.

1-15. Identification of Originating Office. Office symbols are used to identify the office of origin for military correspondence and electronically transmitted messages. Use the office symbol when addressing or replying to military correspondence.

1-16. Expression of Date.

- a. *Dates on military correspondence.* Express dates on military correspondence in one of only two ways: 1 January 2004 or 1 Jan 04. If you abbreviate the month, abbreviate the year.
- b. *Dates on letters.* Express dates on letters only in this way: January 1, 2004. Do not use date stamps on letters.
- c. *Date separation.* When abbreviating a date, do not separate any of the three date elements (day, month, and year). Keep the complete date on one line. If spelling out the date, the only place you may separate any elements is between the month and year. Do not separate the day and month.

1-17. Expression of Time.

- a. *Times on military correspondence.* Time will be expressed in terms of a 24-hour clock. The word "hours" will not be used in conjunction with military time.
- b. *Times on letters.* Express times on letters using the AM or PM format.

1-18. Correspondence Quality Control.

- a. *Correspondence preparation.* For routine staff actions, type and format command correspondence IAW this regulation. "Times New Roman" is the standard font. The standard character size for USSOUTHCOM is 12-point. You may reduce the character size to 10- or 11-point if it helps the document to fit on one page. As a general rule, when preparing correspondence for signature, use "Times New Roman," 12-point; however, to increase readability and "frame" the text of the document, a different point size may be used.
- b. Staff and agency directors will institute and maintain a correspondence quality control program for their organizations.

Section IV - *Effective Writing*

1-19. Standards for Writing.

a. The USSOUTHCOM correspondence will feature clear, concise writing that promotes effective communication and decision-making. Correspondence should be free of errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, construction, or word usage and should be easily understood in a single, rapid reading.

b. Meeting style and construction standards requires two key actions: putting the main point first and writing in the active voice.

(1) Strong construction highlights the most important information first--in other words, put the "bottom line" up front. Begin correspondence with a brief, well-constructed purpose statement outlining the recommendation, conclusion, or request as appropriate. Follow with background or supporting information in descending order of importance.

(2) Active voice is the preferred style. By emphasizing the doer as well as the action, active voice states directly who is responsible and creates shorter, stronger sentences. Examples are:

Active Voice

I request that...(or, Request that...)

Passive Voice

It is requested that...

The 1SG disapproved your request... Your request was disapproved...

c. These additional rules will also increase effectiveness in writing:

(1) Use short words. Try not to use more than 15 percent over two syllables long.

(2) Keep sentences short. The average length of a sentence should be about 15 words.

(3) Write paragraphs that, with few exceptions, are no more than 10 lines.

(4) Use simple terms and avoid jargon. Say, "trailer" rather than "towed vehicular conveyance."

(5) Use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Check your work with the computer's spelling and grammar-check functions, then reread to catch words that may be spelled correctly but misused within the context of a sentence ("there" rather than "their," "hear" rather than "here," and so on).

(6) Unless otherwise directed by the signer of the document, use "I," "you," and "we" as subjects of sentences, not "this office," "this headquarters," "all individuals," "the undersigned," and so forth.

(7) Write one-page letters and memorandums for most correspondence.

(8) Avoid sentences that begin with "It is," "There is," or "There are."

(9) Distinguish between abbreviations and acronyms. Acronyms are all capitals; abbreviations are not. Thus, one writes NCO, IAW, SOP, and MOI; and Feb, Bn, Inf, and Bde.

d. All correspondence (letters, memos, personal for (PFOR) messages, Star-notes, etc.) that require CDR, DCDR, COS signature will be reviewed by the command editor.

Chapter 2 Correspondence Types

Section I - *Messages*

2-1. General. The USSOUTHCOM standard for messages is the Defense Messaging System (DMS).

2-2. Use.

a. *Official Messages.* Official messages will be prepared and processed using the DMS format.

b. *PFOR Messages*. The PFOR message will be used when directed. PFOR messages are those that the originator deems necessary to restrict distribution and are sent to individuals instead of offices or agencies.

2-3. Format. When submitting messages to the Command Group for release, use the following guidelines:

a. General guidelines:

- (1) Use DMS format.
- (2) Addressees should be listed in rank precedence order.
- (3) Make sure the correct office symbol appears on the address line.
- (4) The message should be for the CDR's, DCDR's, or COS's approval for release.
- (5) All classified messages should have declassification instructions at the bottom of the message. Contact the Intelligence Directorate (J2) for additional guidance or refer to J2's "A Guide to Marking Classified Material," dated 25 June 1996.

(6) If the message is classified, each paragraph, to include subparagraphs, should have a classification mark in parentheses at the beginning of the paragraph. The subject line should also have a classification mark.

b. PFOR guidelines:

- (1) Make sure all addressees are listed in the same order they appear in the address lines.
- (2) Type rank, first name, last name, duty position, and command. Separate each addressee with a semi-colon. Be consistent when abbreviating. If you abbreviate the rank of one addressee, abbreviate the others.
- (3) See Appendix B for examples of CDR and DCDR PFOR messages.
- (4) Provide a copy of the message on a diskette.

Section II - Memorandums

2-4. General. There are two types of memorandums: formal and informal.

2-5. Use.

a. *Formal memorandums*. Use the formal memorandum for correspondence that will be sent outside the headquarters, for routine correspondence between two Federal Government agencies outside the DoD, for notification of military or civilian personnel actions, and for showing appreciation or commendation to DoD employees and military members.

b. *Informal memorandums*. Use the informal memorandum for correspondence that is internal to the headquarters. Informal memorandums may be preprinted and used as form letters.

2-6. General rules.

a. *Paper*. The standard size is 8 ½ by 11 inches.

b. *Original pages*.

(1) For formal memorandums, use appropriate USSOUTHCOM white letterhead stationery for the first page and plain white paper for continuation pages. See Appendix C for format sample.

(2) Type or print the informal memorandum on plain white paper. Do not use letterhead. See Appendix D for format sample.

c. *Copies*. Prepare only the number of copies needed.

- d. *Dates.* Type the day, month, and year on the memorandum. Allow two duty days for processing through the Command Group.
- e. *Margins.* The standard margin is 1 inch for both the left and right margins.
- f. *Type styles.* Times New Roman 12-point typestyle is preferred for general correspondence.
- g. *Number of pages.* There is no maximum limit to the number of pages for a memorandum. However, try to limit the number of pages to two. Provide additional information through the use of enclosures.

- h. *Signature blocks.*

- (1) Type the signature block of military officials on three lines with the name (in uppercase) on the first line; rank and branch of service on the second line; and title on the third line. If the title requires an extra line, a fourth line is authorized. Indent the beginning of the fourth line two spaces and begin typing on the third space.

- (2) Type the signature block of civilian officials on two lines with the name (in uppercase) on the first line, and the title on the second line. If the title requires an extra line, a third line is authorized. Indent the beginning of the third line two spaces and begin typing on the third space.

- (3) Do not use academic degrees, religious orders, or fraternal orders as part of the signature block.

2-7. Format. When writing a memorandum, use the modified-block-style-format. The memorandum has three parts: heading, body, and closing.

- a. *Heading.* The heading has five elements:

- (1) *Office or reference symbol.* Type the office or reference symbol on the second line below the seal. The symbol names the writer's office, e.g., SCJ2-JIC-I. Other information may follow the office symbol when needed and if not part of the subject line. Some examples are the name of an individual, contract number, or bill of lading number. Use a person's name only if there is a good reason. Do not crowd the office or reference symbol line. If additional information is lengthy, write it on a second line, flush with the left margin.

- (2) *Date.*

- (a) Put the date on the same line as the office symbol (unless using suspense date).

- (b) End the date even with the right margin.

- (c) Express the date in this order: day, month, year. Day - express in numerals; Month - spell out if the year is not abbreviated and abbreviate if the year is abbreviated (January 2004 or Jan 04, but not January 04 or Jan 2004); Year - express either with two or four digits depending on whether the month is abbreviated or spelled out. The only exception to this rule is if the date stamp uses the abbreviated month and the four-digit year.

- (d) The date may be typed or stamped.

- (3) *Suspense date.* Use a suspense date if a reply is needed by a certain date. Do not impose a suspense date when there is no compelling reason.

- (a) *Placement.* Put the suspense date at the right margin on the same line as the *Reply To Attention Of* or one space above the date of the memorandum.

- (b) *Setting of suspense date.* Always consider the time factors involved. For example: transmission time to the reader, time the reader needs to gather the information, transmission time for the return reply.

- (c) *Format of the date.* See paragraph 2-7a(2c).

- (4) *MEMORANDUM FOR line.* Type MEMORANDUM FOR on the third line below the office symbol. Write to the office that is expected to complete the action. Do not simply address

an action to a headquarters if it is known which element of the headquarters will receive the action. See Appendix I for USSOUTHCOM component commands' addresses. If a person's name is used, place it in parentheses after the office symbol. Continuation lines are left justified. After the word "FOR," address should be written in upper and lowercase letters.

(a) *Single-address memorandums.* When using a single address, MEMORANDUM FOR and the address are on the same line. See Appendix C-1.

(b) *Multiple-address memorandums.* Note that multiple-address memorandums mean more than one and less than six addressees. See Appendix C-2.

(c) *SEE DISTRIBUTION memorandum.* If a memorandum is sent to more than five readers, use the SEE DISTRIBUTION format for the addresses. Type the words "SEE DISTRIBUTION" one space after the words "MEMORANDUM FOR." On the second line below the last line of the signature block or enclosure listing, whichever is lower, type "DISTRIBUTION:" and the addresses as shown in Appendix C-3. The distribution list may be continued on the second page, see Appendix C-4. If necessary, type the complete distribution list on a separate page. The envelope for an addressee on a SEE DISTRIBUTION list should show the complete address, otherwise the U.S. Postal Service will not be able to deliver the letter.

(d) *Memorandums Thru.* Use a memorandum thru to let others, who may have a need, know what is being done and to give them the opportunity to comment, especially if their approval or disapproval will have an impact on the action. See Appendix C-5 (top) for the format for a single memorandum thru. Use the format in Appendix C-5 (bottom) when sending the memorandum thru to more than one reader. Continuation lines are left justified.

(5) *Subject line.* Type the subject line on the second line below the last line of the address. Use only one subject and write the subject in 10 words or less, if possible. If the subject needs more than 10 words, limit the number of words and use authorized abbreviations. If the subject is more than one line, begin the second line flush with the left margin. Regardless of the subject line, make it clear. Type the word "SUBJECT:" in uppercase letters.

b. *Body.*

(1) *Beginning.* Begin the text on the third line below the last line of the subject.

(a) State applicable references in the first sentence. If listing multiple references, see Appendix C-6 for format.

(b) Provide a short, clear purpose sentence.

(c) Put the recommendation, conclusion, or most important information (the main point) next. Some writing combines the purpose and the main point.

(d) Clearly separate each major section. Use paragraphs, headings, or sections.

(e) When applicable, a point of contact line will be the last line of the body of the correspondence.

(2) *Spacing.* Single-space the text with double spacing between paragraphs and subparagraphs. Single space one-paragraph memorandums. On occasion, one-paragraph correspondence requires sub-paragraphing. The spacing for sub-paragraphing is the same as for the basic memorandum.

(3) *Indenting.* Indent subparagraphs four spaces and begin typing on the fifth.

(4) *Numbering paragraphs.*

(a) Do not number a one-paragraph memorandum. See Appendix C-7.

(b) If the memorandum has more than one paragraph, number the paragraphs consecutively using Arabic numerals. For example: 1, 2, 3.

(c) If the paragraphs have sub-paragraphs, use the lowercase letters of the alphabet to identify them. For example:

1.
 - a.
 - b.
2.
 - a.
 - b.

(d) If sub-paragraphs are further divided, use the Arabic numerals in parentheses. For example:

1.
 - a.
 - (1)
 - (2)
 - b.
 - (1)
 - (2)
- 2.

(e) If a third subdivision is necessary, use lowercase letters in parentheses, but do not indent any further.

1.
 - a.
 - (1)
 - (2)
 - (a)
 - (b)
- 2.

(f) Do not subdivide further than three paragraph subdivisions.

c. *Closing*. Major elements: authority line, signature block, and enclosure listing. Sub-elements: DISTRIBUTION listing (if needed) and Copy Furnished (CF).

(1) *Authority line*. Type the authority line at the left margin in uppercase letters on the second line below the last line of the text. The authority line is used by individuals properly designated as having the authority to sign for the commander or the head of an office.

(2) *Signature block*. See Appendix J for sample USSOUTHCOM signature blocks. Begin the signature block on the fifth line below the authority line. If there is no authority line, begin the signature block on the fifth line below the last line of the text.

(3) *Enclosures*. Number and attach enclosures in the same order in which they appear in the memorandum. When there is only one enclosure, do not precede "Encl" with the number "1."

Use only “Encl.” If there are multiple enclosures, precede “Encls” with the number and list the numbered enclosures directly below. Begin the enclosure listing on the same line as the signature block. See Appendix C-8.

(4) *DISTRIBUTION listing* (if needed).

(5) *Copies Furnished (CF)*. Use the copy furnished line to inform others of the subject only if they have a need to know or have an interest in the subject. Type “CF:” followed by the name and mailing address of recipient on the second line below the last line of the signature block, enclosure listing, or distribution listing, whichever is lower.

2-8. Number of pages. The subject determines the number of pages in the memorandum, but try to limit it to two pages. Use enclosures for additional information. If a memorandum is longer than one page, see Appendix C-9, and follow these rules:

a. Type the office symbol at the left margin on the eighth line (one inch) from the top edge of the paper.

b. Type the subject of the memorandum at the left margin on the next line below the office symbol. Begin text on the third line below the subject line. When continuing a memorandum on another page:

(1) Do not divide a paragraph of three lines or less between pages. At least two lines of the divided paragraph must appear on each page.

(2) Include at least two words on each page of any sentence divided between pages.

(3) Do not hyphenate a word between pages.

(4) Do not type the authority line and the signature block on the continuation page without at least two lines of the last paragraph. If, however, a paragraph or subparagraph has only one line, it may be placed alone on the continuation page with the authority line and signature block.

(5) Center the page number approximately one inch from the bottom of the page.

Section III - Endorsements

2-9. General. The use of endorsements as an authorized form of correspondence has been eliminated. Use the memorandum in all instances where an endorsement was previously used.

Section IV - Special Purpose Memorandums

2-10. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

a. *Use.* Use the MOU or MOA to document mutually agreed-to statements of:

(1) Facts

(2) Intentions

(3) Procedures

(4) Limits of future actions either or both will take

(5) Present or future coordination

(6) Present or future commitments

Note: Do not substitute the MOA for formal support agreements within one service or between services. However, you may use the MOA to document an agreement before writing a more formal one.

b. *Format.* See Appendix E.

2-11. Memorandum for Record (MFR).

a. *Use.* Use the MFR to give a summary of preceding correspondence and to show the authority or basis for an action taken.

b. *Contents.*

(1) *Summary.* Write a summary of preceding correspondence when copies of this correspondence will not be retained for file. The summary will contain the source, reference symbol, date, subject, addressee, and action requested or indicated.

(2) *Basis for action.* Show all background information having a direct bearing on the matter. Include the authority and basis for action. This information lets reviewing and signing officials know the history of the action.

(3) *Coordination.* Show the name of the office or agency; name, title, and telephone number of the person contacted; date of coordination; and indication of concurrence, nonconcurrence, or other action.

c. *Format.* Prepare an MFR on plain white paper. You may type an abbreviated form of the MFR on the bottom of all record or file copies, which saves paper and filing space and ensures that all information about the subject is in one place. See details of MFR preparation at Appendix F.

Chapter 3 Letter Preparation

3-1. General. This chapter provides instruction for preparing letters.

3-2. Use. Use the letter for official business with civilians and military members addressed by name. Use the letter also when corresponding with a civilian agency or other government agency officials. The letter is appropriate for military and civilian personnel for official personal correspondence such as letters of welcome, appreciation, commendation, and condolence. See Appendix K for the format.

3-3. Format. The letter consists of three major parts: the heading, the body (text), and the closing.

a. *Heading.*

(1) *Date.* Type the date in civilian style (for example, January 4, 2004) and center it on the letterhead page one line below the heading. Do not use date stamps on original copies.

(2) *Office symbols.* Do not use them on the original letter. If a more specific return address is required it may be included in the text of the letter. Use office symbols on file copies for easy reference or filing.

(3) *Subject line.* Only use subject lines in the letter when absolutely necessary or when they will serve a useful purpose. For example, use subject lines when dealing with contracts or procurement actions.

(4) *Addresses.* Type the address at least three spaces, but no more than six spaces below the Attention Line. Do not use abbreviations in the address. The only exceptions to this rule are the abbreviations DC, U.S., P.O. Box, Mr., Mrs., Dr., Jr., Sr., 2d, II, III, Ret., and the points of the compass: NE, NW, SE, and SW. Always spell out state names.

(5) *Salutation.* Type the salutation on the second line below the last line of the address. See Appendix G for examples.

b. *Body (text).*

(1) Type the first line of the body of the letter on the second line below the salutation. Indent the first line of each paragraph four spaces and start typing on the fifth space.

(2) Do not number or letter paragraphs of a letter. Avoid sub-paragraphs when possible. For effective paragraphs, do not use more than 10 lines.

c. *Closing*. The closing has three sub-elements: complimentary close, signature block, and enclosure.

(1) *Complimentary close*. Start the closing on the second line below the last line of the letter. Begin at the center of the page.

(2) *Signature block*.

(a) Type the signature block on the fifth line below the closing.

(b) Abbreviate "US Army" with "USA" when the correspondence is for Military or DoD personnel. See Appendix J-1.

(c) Do not abbreviate "US Army" if the correspondence is for non-military or non-U.S. personnel, i.e., MODS, CHODS, Foreign Dignitaries, non-DoD Civilians, etc. See Appendix J-2.

(3) *Enclosure or attachment*. Type "Enclosure" at the left margin on the second line below the signature block. Do not show the number of enclosures or list them. If there is more than one enclosure, show the plural form. Do not use the words "As Stated."

(4) *Copy Furnished*. Never use "Copy Furnished" on a letter. If a copy must be furnished, place a statement in the body of the letter, preferably in the last paragraph, indicating that a copy/copies is/are being furnished, and to whom; for example, "I am forwarding a copy of this letter to General Pace, VCJCS."

3-4. Forms of Address, Salutation, and Complimentary Close.

a. Prior to addressing a salutation or completing a communication, determine the name, title, and, in most cases, gender of the addressee.

b. When addressing a high-ranking civilian woman by title, add "Madam" to such titles as "Vice President," "Chairman," "Secretary," "Ambassador," and "Minister."

c. When addressing a civilian woman by surname, use "Miss," "Mrs.," or "Ms."

d. Use "Ms." rather than "Mrs." if there is any doubt about the marital status of a female addressee, or if the addressee has indicated a preference for this term.

e. Make every effort to determine the gender of the recipient when the sender cannot determine the addressee's gender from the first name. The salutation "Dear Madam or Sir:" may also be used (without a surname) if it is not known whether the addressee is male or female.

f. For examples of Address, Salutation, and Complimentary Close, see Appendix G.

g. The USSOUTHCOM Protocol Office is available to assist with any further questions.

Chapter 4 Special Purpose Correspondence

4-1. General. This chapter provides instruction for preparing special purpose correspondence for USSOUTHCOM.

4-2. Star notes.

a. *Use*. Flag and General officers use star notes as transmittal documents or to convey short sentiments of appreciation, congratulations, or condolences. The star note is printed on high-quality embossed stationery.

b. *Format*.

- (1) Use flag letterhead when preparing star notes. (Note: Star notes prepared for CDR, DCDR, or COS signature are submitted on plain bond paper.)
- (2) When preparing a star note, coordinate with the appropriate executive officer. He or she can provide useful information on acceptable writing style(s).
- (3) Limit the length of a star note to one page.
- (4) See Appendix L for star note format.
- (5) Star notes should only be used for military members and civilians who are employed by the military.

4-3. Staff Action Summary Sheet (SASS).

a. *Purpose.* The SASS serves as an executive summary, tracking document, and coordinating document for all completed staff actions.

b. *Use.* A SASS is required for all staff actions sent to the Command Group. As a general rule, if the staff action has an SJS tasking number or if the staff action requires the staff to prepare, provide, review, draft, conduct, analyze, answer, inform, recommend, request, or respond, then a SASS is required. The following are the exceptions:

- (1) Officer and enlisted evaluations that do not require any special action.
- (2) Award recommendations that are not late or do not require any special actions.
- (3) A note or buckslip written by a Flag Officer.
- (4) SJS taskers requiring e-mail response.

c. *Format.* See Appendix M-1. The SASS will include the purpose for the submission, background information, if necessary, recommendation, and coordination. A SASS must always be one page. Continuation sheets showing coordination is the only acceptable exception. The SASS consists of the following parts:

(1) *Classification.* Ensure the SASS has the proper classification. If the SASS is a cover sheet for classified documents but contains no classified information on the SASS, ensure the SASS is classified (unclassified when removed from enclosures).

(2) *Routing.* The thru block includes originating Directorate, DCOS, COS and DCDR, if going to the CDR.

(3) *Purpose.* Specifically state what you want the command to do, i.e., sign Tab A, initial SASS, release message, provide information.

(4) *Background.* Explain the action, put the issue in context. If the staff action answers a question, restate the question. Include an executive summary if one is not included as part of the action. Do not repeat verbatim sentences from the enclosed Tabs. Bullets highlighting key aspects of the action are preferred.

(5) *Recommendation.* Restate the purpose sign..., release..., initial..., etc.

(6) *Coordination.* If the tasker lists a Directorate or Special Staff as an assist, the staff action must be coordinated. Do not include internal sub-organizations to the originator of the document on the SASS.

d. *Tabs.* Tabs are always lettered A, B, C, etc. Any documents requiring action (signature, initial, release) will always be Tab A. List all tabs in order on the SASS. If information is attached to a tab, it is called an enclosure. A tab is lettered and an enclosure is numbered, i.e., Tab A or Enclosure 1.

4-4. After-Action Report (AAR).

a. *Use.* Use the AAR to summarize a preceding event, such as an official coordination visit, training session, visit of distinguished visitor, or other activity, with the view of capturing lessons learned to improve or sustain future action(s).

b. *Format.*

(1) For official visits, coordination, site surveys, and other routine actions, use the same format as that of the information paper. The After-Action Report content should compare performance to expectation, capture elements to sustain or improve, and suggest possible enhancements to be used during similar future events.

(2) See Appendix N for sample report format.

4-5. Weekly Significant Activity Report.

a. *Use.* All directorates prepare this report to provide an update of significant activities that occurred during the week.

b. *Format.* If the report is classified, mark all paragraphs appropriately. The intent behind this format is to minimize the amount of time required to prepare the report, make the information provided more useful to the Command Group, and standardize the procedures. The key to providing information in this format is to only include that information that is truly important to the Command Group. Information that resulted in progress, or a decision, key milestones of critical plans, etc. Include information that requires Command Group guidance, action, decision or commitment of resources. Putting NSTR (Nothing Significant to Report) on this report is appropriate if nothing occurred that rises to the Command Group interest or visibility level. See Appendix O for format.

c. *Special instructions.* Directors will e-mail this report every last work day of the week NLT 1200 (Noon). Send them to the COS and DCOS (only) and carbon copy (cc) all Directors. The COS will then validate the information and forward to the CDR/DCDR.

4-6. Information Paper (Fact Sheet).

a. *Use.* The information paper is a concise fact sheet submitted on request to the Command Group, Directorate, or Special Staff. It provides information on one specific subject without calling for argument or offering recommendation.

b. *Format.* Information papers, also known as fact sheets, are normally one page in length, not to exceed two. The format is at Appendix P-1.

4-7. Decision Paper.

a. *Use.* Decision papers are used to present information and request a decision from the CDR, DCDR, COS, or other Directors, or other Special Staff.

b. *Format.* A decision paper is normally one page in length, not to exceed two. The format is the same split-page organization as that of an information paper, but with a block provided for the decision to be indicated. A sample decision paper is at Appendix P-2.

4-8. Talking Points.

a. Talking points are required any time there is General Officer involvement with a distinguished visitor (DV).

b. *Use.* The CDR, DCDR, COS, and others use talking points as references and speaking points at conferences, briefings, meetings, and office calls. The talking points paper provides information and generally should include a recommended USSOUTHCOM position on issues presented.

c. *Format.* A talking points paper is normally one page in length, not to exceed three. See Appendix P-3.

4-9. Distinguished Visit or Concept (DV Concept).

a. *Use.* The visit concept prepares the CDR, DCDR, COS, Directors or other Special Staff for office calls, meetings, briefings, or special events with distinguished visitors. It serves the same purpose as the read ahead, but supplies greater detail. The COS tasks USSOUTHCOM staff to provide visit concepts for his approval.

b. *Format.*

(1) Prepare the visit concept using the guidelines identified in Appendix Q. Organize contents with letter tabs and place in a folder. If classified, use appropriate markings. Remember, the key to good preparation is coordination with the CDR, DCDR, COS or Directorate XO. Visit concepts for the Command Group will be coordinated with the USSOUTHCOM Protocol Office prior to submission to the SJS, but if it is a CDR's speech/presentation requirement, coordinate with the Commander Action Group (CAG).

(2) A visit concept packet will include the following:

(a) Visit concept paper that details visitor's name, position, purpose of the visit, itinerary, and summary of general officer involvement.

(b) Talking points paper for each event/activity in which the CDR, DCDR, or COS may be involved. See Appendix P-3.

(c) Biography(ies).

(d) Information papers, paper copies of briefing slides, or other items, depending on the issues to be discussed or activities (briefing, round-table discussion) planned.

c. The visit concept is prepared in draft to discuss at the DCOS or COS IPR. Immediately following the IPR, the DV concept in final form is due to the COS. Although the actual preparation of talking points, biographies, and information paper may be the responsibility of the assist, the lead is responsible for ensuring all are included in the final packet.

4-10. Information (Trip) Book.

a. *Use.* Trip books prepare the CDR, DCDR, COS or other staff directors for office calls, meetings, briefings, or special events when they travel.

b. *Format.*

(1) Prepare the trip book using Appendix R. Use an appropriately sized 3-ring binder (from your own directorate) and organize contents with lettered tabs. Each trip book will have a cover sheet showing the name of the place being visited and dates of the trip.

(2) A trip book will include the following:

(a) Table of contents.

(b) Itinerary/Quick Look.

(c) Trip overview. See Appendix R.

(d) Talking points paper (separate paper for each office call specified in trip overview). See Appendix P-3.

(e) Biography(ies).

(f) Fact sheets, position papers, paper slides, country background, information on USSOUTHCOM assets assigned, and the like, depending on the issues to be discussed or type of activities planned for the CDR or DCDR during the trip (briefings, office calls, socials, etc.).

(3) Read ahead information will be tabbed, as required, using lettered tabs. Do not use document protectors when building visit and trip books. The CDR may wish to highlight or make marginal notes and the use of document protectors restricts this action.

Chapter 5 Assembling Military Correspondence and USSOUTHCOM Staff Actions

5-1. General. This chapter describes each of the four methods for submitting a staff action to the Command Group.

5-2. Staff Action Folder. Package all staff actions in a directorate specific folder. These color-coded pre-printed folders prevent the loss of documents and also provide rapid directorate ownership of a staff action. A staff action folder consists of a SASS, tabbed supporting documents, diskette, and SJS tracking sheets.

a. *SASS.*

(1) Make sure the Director's or Deputy Director's initials are in the THRU block before forwarding to the Command Group and all required coordination is recorded.

(2) Place the SASS on top of your action as the first document in the package (on the right side of folder). On the left side of folder, include a copy of the tasking source (e-mail, etc.) and copies of all coordination (previous and new).

b. *Tabs.*

(1) Tab A is always the action tab for correspondence to be signed, approved, released, or forwarded for some other type of action. If multiple actions are required, subdivide Tab A with numbered enclosures.

(2) Subsequent tabs are for backup information, staff coordination comments, or other information.

(3) Cite all tabs, in sequence, on the basic cover document, i.e. SASS, significant activity report, information books.

c. *Diskette.* Oftentimes, packages have minor spelling or grammatical errors. The SJS will fix all minor errors if a disk is provided. Otherwise, the package is returned wasting valuable time and effort.

d. *SJS Tracking Sheet.* All staff actions are logged in or out by the SJS. A tracking sheet is placed on the left side in order to track the action. The SJS is solely responsible for placing the tracking sheet in the folder.

(1) *Notes or Buckslips.* Never place a note or buckslip/star note on the outside of the folder. Directors (only) who desire to amplify a staff action with a personal note to CDR, DCDR, COS, will place that note inside (right side) on top of the SASS.

(2) *Clam Clips.* Clam clips are the only acceptable method to attach documents. **DO NOT USE PAPER CLIPS OR STAPLES TO ATTACH TABS TO A SASS OR ENCLOSURES TO TABS. ONLY USE CLAM CLIPS!**

5-3. E-mail Responses.

a. If the SJS tasker directs the AO to respond by e-mail, use the format IAW the sample at Appendix S.

b. As a general rule, e-mail answers will not include attachments or require coordination. If the action is of such a nature to require coordination or attachments, then prepare a standard staff action package with a SASS.

c. All e-mail responses must be sent by the Director, Deputy Director, or Executive Officer, and sent to the SJS, DCOS, and COS.

d. The SJS will forward all e-mails to end users and other interested persons.

5-4. Commander's Docket. The CDR's docket is an informal briefing to the CDR. The SJS will task AOs to provide a five minute brief (without slides) to the CDR on any given topic. Normally, the topics are for information only. The docket is never used as a forum for a decision brief. Directors are not required to attend a docket. It is the CDR's intent to go one-on-one with the AO to discuss the topic. The docket is scheduled once a month and will consist of 5-7 topics. Each AO brief will last approximately five minutes.

5-5. In-Progress Review (IPR). The IPR is an informal briefing to the CDR, DCDR, COS, or DCOS. The IPR is normally required as a milestone event prior to the execution of a DV visit, conference, or exercise. The AO must be prepared to brief the details of his concept. Any IPR to the CDR or DCDR will always be preceded by the IPR to the COS.

The proponent agency of this regulation is the U.S. Southern Command. Users are invited to send comments and suggested improvements directly to HQ USSOUTHCOM, ATTN: SCSJS, 3511 NW 91st Avenue, Miami, Florida 33172-1217.

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